

Are suicide attacks irrational?

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The United States (U.S.) military swiftly carried out a drone strike against a member of the Islamic State (IS) a day after the suicide attacks at Kabul airport, inflicting at least 175 casualties and 120 injured [1]. The U.S.'s revenge might continue, suicide attacks will come again, and the vicious cycle of violence goes on [2]. No one knows when the cycle will end.

The question is: "are their actions rational?"

From the standpoint of the U.S., their swift reaction to eliminate a IS member is rational, but how about the former suicide attacks of the "terrorists"?

In common sense, suicidality, regardless of forms (ideation or behavior), is deemed irrational and usually condemned by other people. We can have many options to choose from in our life, so why would we choose to kill ourselves? No one chooses to kill themselves if they are enjoying their life and find meaningful things from it. Unless the perceived cost of living is even greater than its benefit, suicidal ideation will appear and be considered an option [3].

Many things can be meaningful in our lives, like family, friends, hobbies, religions, countries, etc. If all those things are dishonored, or even destroyed, what would we do?

Ignore, revenge, or suicide? It depends on the cost-benefit judgements of each individual. Still, the negativity in the human mind might be easily made use of by religious leaders with distorted political interest using the belief mechanism in the psycho-religious process. Subsequent radicalized actions, like suicide attacks, sometimes are unavoidable and eventually reinforce the bloodshed [4].

The thing or action that we deem irrational can be perceived as rational by other people just because humans do not always stand on a similar viewpoint. So do the U.S. and the suicide attackers. Perhaps, mutual communication and trust-building activities are the keys to end this vicious cycle of violence [4].

References

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